United Nations E/ECE/1476

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
28 January 2015

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Sixty-sixth session
Geneva, 14–16 April 2015
Item 5 of the provisional agenda
Progress in the implementation of the outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE

Progress in the implementation of the outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE

Note by the secretariat

I. Mandate

1. The rules of procedure of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) require basic documents to be prepared in relation to the agenda items, as appropriate. This document is being submitted to support the discussion under agenda item 5 of the sixty-sixth session of ECE.

II. Implementation of the outcome of the review of the 2005 reform

2. The Outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE was adopted by decision A (65) of the Economic Commission for Europe at its sixty-fifth session in 2013. This document provides a report on the progress in the implementation of that outcome, covering the period from May 2013 to January 2015.

3. As stipulated in paragraph 6 of the Outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE, the eight subprogrammes of ECE continued their work based on the priorities and activities identified in the review process, within the existing regular budgetary and additional extrabudgetary resources under the overall guidance and decisions of the Sectoral Committees and the Executive Committee (EXCOM).

4. Some specific areas for each subprogramme are highlighted for the attention of ECE member States as follows:

A. Environment subprogramme

5. In accordance with Commission decision A (65), the Environment subprogramme, the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) and its related subsidiary bodies continued

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working within existing mandates. In line with its objective, the Environment subprogramme emphasizes a country needs-based approach and focuses on developing the capacity of Eastern and South-Eastern European, Caucasian and Central Asian countries in environmental policy and management, including for the effective implementation of environmental legislation. It further promotes the environmental aspects of sustainable development and the implementation of relevant outcomes of environment and sustainable development conferences, including regional conferences. The mid-term review of the outcomes of the 2011 Astana Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference organized during the nineteenth session of CEP in October 2013 showed progress and challenges in accomplishing the commitments taken by Ministers. The next EfE Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016) will look into advancing a green economy in the pan-European region and improving air quality for better environment and human health, as well as promoting education for sustainable development.

6. The subprogramme continued its activities to build capacity, using extrabudgetary resources, for environmental observation, assessment and reporting. It continued to conduct environmental performance reviews (EPRs) and to assist countries to implement the recommendations provided in the reviews.

7. The CEP reaffirmed that the ECE multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) were unique instruments for international environmental governance. The promotion of synergies and cooperation between the ECE MEAs are being systematically considered through a dedicated informal framework.

8. Recognizing that an increasing number of instruments are being administered by the Environment Division, discussions are underway with the Bureaux of environmental convention bodies on possible ways of ensuring adequate financial support. An internal process is also ongoing to identify good practices and lessons learned from the cooperation with other United Nations programmes and agencies, as well as other relevant organizations, aimed at achieving a more structured and systematic cooperation.

B. Transport subprogramme

9. The Transport subprogramme continued to implement existing mandates under the overall guidance of the Inland Transport Committee, its subsidiary bodies and EXCOM, as well as under the overall guidance of the Economic and Social Council with regard to its Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals. In the past two years, the subprogramme strengthened its focus on the areas of harmonization of vehicle regulations,[1] road safety,[2] transport of dangerous goods, border-crossing facilitation,[3] unified railway law,[4] implementation of the European Agreement Concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles Engaged in International Road Transport (AETR),[5] and intelligent transport systems.[6] Full account of the progress made in the implementation of each of the areas listed above is provided in referenced documents.

10. Synergies among these areas of work with an overarching goal of promoting safe, clean and competitive sustainable transport were further increased by launching the

[1] ECE/TRANS/2015/11
[2] ECE/TRANS/2015/12
[3] ECE/TRANS/2015/16
[4] ECE/TRANS/2015/14
[5] ECE/TRANS/2015/13
[6] ECE/TRANS/2015/6

ForFITS tool[7] and initiating the development of two new modules – SafeFITS and Non-Road Mobile Machinery.

11. In accordance with decision A (65), two posts (one P-4 and one P-2) were transferred from the then Economic Cooperation, Trade, and Land Management Division to the Transport Division in January 2014 and located in the section servicing Working Party 29.[8]

C. Statistics subprogramme

12. Following the Outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE, the Statistics subprogramme and its subsidiary bodies have continued implementing existing mandates under the overall guidance of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) and EXCOM. The good cooperation with partner organizations such as Eurostat, the Commonwealth of Independent States Statistical Committee, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), World Bank and International Monetary Fund continued. These organizations are actively involved in the work of CES, its Bureau and teams of specialists. The close cooperation results in standards, guidelines and recommendations used by many countries in the ECE region and beyond.

13. As requested by the Outcome of the review, particular attention has been given to the work on measuring sustainable development. The plenary session of the CES endorsed, in June 2013, the *CES Recommendations for Measuring Sustainable Development*. These Recommendations present a measurement framework and a set of indicators which can be used for international comparison. The Recommendations provided an input into designing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They are also used as a reference by the United Nations Statistical Commission Expert Group in developing the indicator framework for reporting on SDGs. In October 2014, the ECE Statistics subprogramme hosted a consultative meeting for international organizations based in Geneva to provide input to the Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on Data Revolution for Sustainable Development. The CES work on modernization of statistical production and services provides guidance to member countries on the use of new data sources, new tools and technology to advance the measurement of progress.

14. The expected SDGs also call for "taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts" and "promoting mechanisms for raising capacities for effective climate change-related planning and management". In April 2014, the CES plenary session endorsed the first ever *Recommendations on Climate Change-Related Statistics* aimed at improving existing official statistics to support climate change analysis and reporting on greenhouse gas emissions under the Kyoto Protocol.

15. The Statistics subprogramme continued its capacity-building activities from extrabudgetary resources to improve the statistical capacity of ECE countries with developing statistical systems.

D. Economic cooperation and integration subprogramme

16. The subprogramme continued implementing its existing mandates on innovation, competitiveness and public-private partnerships. Under the Team of Specialists on Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), a project-based approach has been developed for standards and

[7] For Future Inland Transport Systems (see http://www.unece.org/?id=19273)

[8] World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations

recommendations with a view to delivering concrete results within clear timeframes and the International PPP Centre of Excellence has focused much of its work on the collection and exchange of best practices in response.

17. Responding to the request of member States to integrate the issue of intellectual property into the work of the Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies, the Team of Specialists on Intellectual Property has been discontinued and its members have been invited to join the Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness. In response to the request that any technical cooperation activities related to intellectual property should be carried out by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), existing technical cooperation activities related to intellectual property were completed by the end of 2013. No technical cooperation activities were planned for 2014 and new requests for technical assistance have been referred to WIPO.

E. Trade subprogramme

18. The subprogramme continued implementing its standard-setting mandates under the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6), the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) and the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT).

19. In response to the request of member States to strengthen the standard-setting work under WP.6, WP.7 and UN/CEFACT, the following actions have been taken. A P-3 editorial post has been reassigned to WP.6 (following a retirement within the Trade subprogramme) and the work under another P-3 post has been reorganized so as to give more support to WP.7. As a result, both WP.6 and WP.7 are now serviced by two full-time programme officers (one P-4 and one P-3 each). With regard to UN/CEFACT, it is now reporting directly to EXCOM. The standard-setting work has resulted in several new and revised recommendations, standards and tools, particularly supporting the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement of the World Trade Organization. The P-4 post (remaining after the transfer of two Professional level posts to Transport Division) was reassigned to servicing the standard-setting activities of UN/CEFACT.

20. In terms of improving communication and emphasizing the practical and political importance of the standard-setting bodies under the Trade subprogramme, a P-2 post that was previously allocated partly to programme planning and budget, and partly to support WP.6, has been re-assigned to focus principally on information and communications for all Trade standards work (WP.6, WP.7 and UN/CEFACT). A staff member with expertise in that area has been recruited and will work closely with other staff and the elected officers of the working parties in order to improve communications.

F. Committee on Trade and Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration

21. Following the Outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE, the Committee on Trade and the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration were for the first time organized back-to-back in the same week of 10–14 February 2014. During the sessions, both Committees considered possibilities to synergize their work.

22. The secretariat was invited to draw up a report by the summer of 2014 so as to allow EXCOM to take a decision, before 1 December 2014, on whether or not to merge the two Committees.

23. A joint report by the Bureaux of the two Committees identified three potential areas for synergies. The secretariat also prepared a report that evaluated options to support these synergies based on considerations of: conditions for success; the ability of each option to fulfil committee functions; and estimated cost savings. Both reports were submitted to EXCOM at its meeting in July 2014 at which no decision was taken on whether to merge the two Committees. Since then, EXCOM held further discussions on this matter, both in formal meetings and in informal consultations. At the time of submission of this document in January 2015, EXCOM was preparing to agree on:

(a) The establishment of a new Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards, that would replace the Committee on Trade;

(b) Renaming the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration as 'Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships'; and

(c) Revising the terms of reference of the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration to be used as terms of reference for the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships.

G. Sustainable energy subprogramme

24. The subsidiary bodies of the Committee on Sustainable Energy have been organized along the lines set forth in decision A (65) Outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE, including specifically its appendix II. The changes include establishment of Groups of Experts on Energy Efficiency, Renewable Energy, and Gas. The Ad Hoc Groups of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Production and Coal Mine Methane are no longer ad hoc groups, and the Expert Group on Resource Classification remains unchanged. All of these groups are working to deliver concrete results. The Committee on Sustainable Energy will continue its energy security dialogue through its annual sessions. The secretariat has been reorganized to align with requirements to provide needed support for the subsidiary bodies.

25. The Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Production from Fossil Fuels has prepared recommendations regarding Carbon Capture and Storage for consideration by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in the context of a post-2015 instrument. The *Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Drainage and Use in Coal Mines* has been translated into Spanish, Mongolian and Serbian. The Expert Group on Resource Classification has issued its specifications for UNFC-2009 and has approved the Bridging Document between the OECD NEA/IAEA Uranium Classification[9] and UNFC-2009. Work continues in all of the groups of experts to deliver expected results. The Gas Centre activities are coordinated with those of the Group of Experts on Gas, ensuring dialogue between Governments and industry.

H. Forestry and timber subprogramme

26. The subprogramme and its subsidiary bodies continued implementing existing mandates under the guidance of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and EXCOM. During the reporting period, priority was given to the implementation of the ECE/FAO[10] Integrated Programme of Work, including servicing the ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management and eight Teams of Specialists

[9] Joint Report by the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

[10] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

dealing with various aspects of the programme of work, as well as supporting the implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy, adopted in 2013. The seventy-second session of the ECE Committee on Forests and Forest Industry (COFFI) in Kazan in November 2014 showed that many ECE member States were already taking practical action to implement the recommendations of the Plan. The ECE/FAO Joint Section of Forestry and Timber also placed emphasis on the preparation of the study on progress towards achieving the global objectives on sustainable forest management and related challenges in the ECE region as a contribution to the eleventh session of United Nations Forum on Forests, matters related to forest information, reporting and outlook, and the role of forests in the post-2015 development agenda.

27. Steps were taken to strengthen cooperation with FAO on forest-related issues, which included servicing the joint meetings of the Bureau of COFFI and the Executive Committee of FAO EFC,[11] as well the work of the ECE-FAO Steering Committee.

28. Considering the recent increase in the workload under the subprogramme, and taking into account the provisions of paragraphs 31c) and d) of Commission decision A (65) on the Outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE, the Executive Secretary decided to establish a separate Division on Forests, Land and Housing, allocating to it the D-1 post freed up from the merge between the then Trade and Sustainable Land Management Division and the Economic Cooperation and Integration Division, in order to strengthen the capacity of the secretariat to implement the mandates and activities under the Forestry and Timber subprogramme and the Housing and Land Management subprogramme (without the population component).

I. Housing and Land Management and Population subprogramme

29. Work on housing and land management continued within existing mandates under the guidance of the Committee on Housing and Land Management and EXCOM. Particular attention was given to sustainable housing and urban development during the reporting period, especially in the light of the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference. The results included: agreement on the text of the Geneva United Nations Charter on Sustainable Housing, which sets the economic, social and environmental principles of sustainable housing and identifies key directions of work and measures to promote sustainable housing; practical steps towards the implementation of the Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management in the ECE region for 2014–2020; work on smart cities; activities aimed at promoting sustainable construction materials; and launch of the study on standards related to energy efficiency in buildings and disaster risk reduction.

30. Work on population continued under the guidance of EXCOM. The policy framework for active ageing outlined by the 2012 Vienna Ministerial Declaration has been at the heart of the work of the ECE Population programme. The Population Unit carried out a number of activities in relation to the goals of the Declaration and the principles of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy (MIPAA/RIS). In 2013, addressing broader population and development issues, the ECE Population Unit, jointly with the United Nations Population Fund, held the High-level Regional Conference Enabling Choices: Population Priorities for the 21st Century and launched a report "*ICPD*[12] *Beyond 2014: The UNECE Region's Perspective*".

[11] European Forestry Commission of FAO

[12] International Conference on Population and Development

J. Gender

31. ECE continued to work on issues of gender and the economy, and women's entrepreneurship in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The 2014–2015 gender action plan for the ECE secretariat to mainstream gender was also established.

32. On 6–7 November 2014 ECE, together with UN Women, hosted the Beijing+20 Regional Review Meeting. The meeting reviewed progress and setbacks of the past 20 years in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, a landmark policy framework that was adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Long-term trends in gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as emerging obstacles and methods to combat them, were identified at the meeting and incorporated into the co-chairs' conclusions. The latter has been submitted to the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women as a regional input to the global Beijing+20 review.

K. Relations with other organizations

33. In order to achieve synergy and avoid overlap and duplication, ECE works with its various partners in order to achieve its results.

34. During the reporting period, it has signed new memorandums of understanding or cooperation agreements with the following organizations: Electric Power Council of the Commonwealth of Independent States; Eurasian Economic Commission; Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States; International Geothermal Association; International Renewable Energy Agency; Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century; Secretariat of the Integration Committee of the Eurasian Economic Community (jointly signed with ESCAP[13]).

35. The implementation of ECE legal instruments, norms and standards, and the achievement of sustained economic growth and sustainable development in the region is done at the national level. Therefore coordination and cooperation with other agencies operating at the country level is essential. Currently, ECE participates in the implementation of United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in 17 countries and in planning of UNDAF for a new 2016–2020 cycle in 11 countries. The engagement with UNDAF ensures better alignment with national priorities, increases visibility, enhances development impact and increases the sustainability of ECE operational work. Furthermore, it will support countries' efforts to implement the post-2015 development agenda and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, as UNDAF provides an effective framework for monitoring and accountability, resource mobilization and partnerships.

36. At the regional level, ECE contributes to 'Delivering as One' through the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) which brings together the heads of the European offices of the United Nations Funds, Programmes and Specialized Agencies under the chairmanship of ECE. Recent work of the RCM has focused mostly on the implementation of Millennium Development Goals in the region, Rio+20 and the post-2015 development agenda. The RCM has further strengthened its cooperation with the regional United Nations Development Group (UNDG) through bi-annual back-to back meetings, as well as the joint organization of multi-stakeholder regional consultation meetings on the post-2015 development agenda, on monitoring and accountability and on gender equality (Beijing+20). The RCM provides a good mechanism for exchanges of information on

[13] Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

regional programmes of work of the participating agencies to avoid duplication and identify synergies.

L. Management and resources

37. The Office of the Executive Secretary ensures sound management and proper functioning of the ECE secretariat. In the reporting period it has taken a number of steps.

Evaluation policy

38. In ensuring a proper evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of ECE work, it developed a new ECE evaluation policy, aimed at strengthening the independence, credibility and usefulness of evaluations, which was approved by EXCOM on 3 October 2014. The new Policy aligns it with UNEG[14] Norms and Standards and strengthens the role of the Office of Executive Secretary for quality assurance and oversight of evaluations, with the Programme Management Unit acting as focal point and overseeing the conduct of all evaluations. The Policy envisages one programme-level evaluation and three subprogramme-level evaluations in a biennium. All extrabudgetary projects with a budget of at least US$ 250,000 are also subject to evaluation at the end of the project cycle. The theme of the programme-level evaluation for 2014–2015 is "Review of the Role of Information and Communications in Promoting the Visibility of the Work of the ECE". The evaluation report is expected in March 2015 and will be posted on the ECE public website, together with the management response. The implementation of the management response will be closely monitored and reported to EXCOM.

Extrabudgetary funds approval and reporting

39. To ensure full transparency for extrabudgetary spending, the secretariat has developed a Project Monitoring Tool. The Tool is based on the project form and the template for a results-based cost plan approved by EXCOM. It provides information about progress in implementation throughout the project cycle and is available on the public ECE website. At its meeting on 3 October 2014, EXCOM agreed that all extrabudgetary projects would require its approval except: (i) those approved by EXCOM as part of work programmes of ECE Sectoral Committees as well as (ii) those approved by the Contracting Parties as part of the programme work of the convention bodies.

40. In response to the recommendation of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) to ensure transparent, effective and efficient management of extrabudgetary resources and strengthen the accountability of staff for their use, the ECE secretariat established an internal Directive on the Establishment of Agreements and Management of Extrabudgetary Resources. It also revised the internal Guidelines for the Grants Committee, to include a provision for audit of the ECE grants per United Nations financial regulation and rules.

41. Following the OIOS audit of selected projects in the Sustainable Energy Division, ECE developed a management response and by April 2015 will have implemented all but one recommendation. The remaining recommendation is due by 30 June 2015. The OIOS audit report, the management response and the status of implementation of OIOS recommendations are available on the ECE public website.

[14] United Nations Evaluation Group

Human resources and internal structure

42. From the Global Trade Solutions Section of the then Economic Cooperation, Trade and Land Management Division two Professional level posts were transferred to the Transport Division and one remaining Professional post had its functions reorganized so as to strengthen the support to the work of WP.6 and WP.7.

43. In September 2014, the Trade and Sustainable Land Management Division and the Division on Economic Cooperation and Integration were merged into one, freeing up one D-1 post and one G post. In November 2014, the new Executive Secretary subsequently decided to split the merged Division into two new Divisions: the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division and the Forests, Land and Housing Division. The D-1 post that was saved from the merge of two Divisions has since been used to establish the post of Director of the Forests, Land and Housing Division. This new Division is responsible for the implementation of work under the subprogramme on Forestry and Timber and the subprogramme on Housing and Land Management (without the population component which is implemented by Statistics Division). As for the one G post freed up, it was abolished as a result of budget cuts for the 2014–2015 biennium.

44. The review outcome requested that contacts be made with the Regional Office of UNFPA in Istanbul to start cooperation with them with a view to freeing up resources. The secretariat met with the management of the UNFPA Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECARO) in autumn 2013 to review the ongoing cooperation and lessons learned from the intensive collaboration under the ICPD Beyond 2014 project. It was agreed to hold annual meetings to share and discuss the work programmes of both agencies, identify possible joint activities in population and development area with the purpose to avoid duplication of work. The first results of this agreement took place already in the course of 2014 (see also paragraph 30 above relating to ECE work on population).

45. The review outcome also requested the secretariat to explore the possibility of merging the activities on gender and population, with a view to freeing up resources. An internal ECE task force on the implementation of decision A (65) reviewed the gender-related activities of the Population Unit and those of the Development Policies and Cross-Sectoral Coordination Unit (DPCCU). The task force concluded that the respective activities are very different in nature and that it was therefore not possible to free up resources through functional synergies.

Guidelines on Procedures and Practices

46. During the reporting period, the Committee on Housing and Land Management at its sixty-fifth session in October 2014 adopted its Rules of Procedure which were subsequently reviewed by EXCOM and considered to be in line with the Guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies. The EXCOM also approved the "UN/CEFACT structure, mandate, terms of reference and procedures, Revision 5".

47. The secretariat continued the practice of circulating for the information of the permanent missions prior to meetings of the ECE subsidiary bodies: draft lists of participants; nominated candidates for the Bureaux of different ECE bodies; draft decisions, conclusions and recommendations.

Communication and public outreach

48. The secretariat continued to implement the Communication Strategy. This included the expanded use of social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook and YouTube). The live coverage of major conferences via Twitter (including at the Regional Ministerial Consultation "Monitoring and Accountability for the post-2015 development agenda" and the Beijing+20 Regional Review) opened new forms of interactive participation, allowing

stakeholders to join in and react regardless of whether they were physically present in the conference room. ECE accounts on Google+ and Instagram, two fast-growing platforms, were opened in 2014, offering new channels to disseminate information about ECE and its activities.

49. The ECE Weekly newsletter was upgraded from a static pdf version to a more modern and flexible html version allowing readers to read the articles via a simple click from their email. The new version was launched in August 2014.

50. The secretariat also produced more films to explain its activities to wider audiences, in particular on road safety, European forestry, the prevention of industrial accidents, as well as short video interviews of experts on key topics such as energy, the Aarhus Convention, statistics, water, etc.

51. The ECE website has been entirely revamped, using in-house expertise. Its new, streamlined and more user-friendly version went live on 16 December 2014. The Executive Secretary has also started a blog to regularly and personally communicate with the public.

52. The ECE website includes stories on the impact of the work of ECE on people's daily life and an 'Open ECE' section with accessible information on evaluations, audits, programme and project performance.

United Nations E/ECE/1477

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
3 February 2015

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Sixty-sixth session
Geneva, 14–16 April 2015
Item 6 of the provisional agenda
Report on activities of the Executive Committee

Report on activities of the Executive Committee

Note by the Chairman of the Executive Committee

I. Background

1. The rules of procedure of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) require basic documents to be prepared in relation to the agenda items as appropriate. This document is being submitted to support the discussions under item 6 at the sixty-sixth session of ECE.

II. Functions of the Executive Committee

2. The Executive Committee (EXCOM) was established by ECE member States as a result of the Reform of 2005. According to the Work Plan on ECE Reform (E/ECE/1434/Rev.1), EXCOM acts on behalf of the Commission between the biennial sessions of the latter and can seize itself of all matters related to ECE activities in conformity with its Terms of Reference. The implementation of the overall guidance set by the Commission is entrusted to EXCOM.

3. EXCOM has the following main functions:

(a) Preparing the sessions of the Commission;

(b) Ensuring programmatic coherence and oversight: approving the programme of work of the Sectoral Committees and reviewing its implementation; approving groups under the Sectoral Committees; reviewing the strategic framework and programme narratives; avoiding duplication and overlap in ECE activities; and exchanging views with the Chairs of the Sectoral Committees;

(c) Addressing any emerging issues calling for a decision in between the biennial sessions of the Commission;

(d) Overseeing the work of the secretariat.

4. At its sixty-third session in 2009, ECE decided that the Chairperson and Vice-chairpersons of the Commission would also serve as the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of EXCOM for the period of the biennium.

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5. At its sixty-fifth session in 2013, the Commission elected Netherlands as its Chair, and Switzerland and Turkmenistan as its Vice-chairs.

6. EXCOM meets on an ad hoc basis and the agenda of each meeting is set by the Chairperson in consultation with the Vice-chairpersons and the Executive Secretary.

7. The Chairs of the Sectoral Committees – or the Vice-Chairs – are invited to the meetings of EXCOM to report on the work of their respective Committees. At each meeting, the Executive Secretary briefs EXCOM on the latest developments and major activities carried out by the secretariat.

III. Main achievements

8. In accordance with paragraph 27 of the Outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE, the Executive Committee should "see to it that all subsidiary bodies and the secretariat apply the Guidelines on Procedures and Practices". During the reporting period, the Committee on Housing and Land Management at its sixty-fifth session in October 2014 adopted its Rules of Procedure which were subsequently reviewed by EXCOM and considered to be in line with the Guidelines on Procedures and Practices for ECE bodies. EXCOM also approved the "UN/CEFACT structure, mandate, terms of reference and procedures, Revision 5".

9. The secretariat continued the practice of circulating for the information of the permanent missions prior to meetings of the ECE subsidiary bodies: draft lists of participants; nominated candidates for the Bureaux of different ECE bodies; draft decisions, conclusions and recommendations.

10. All in all, since the last Commission session until the time of submission of this report, EXCOM held 14 meetings and 10 informal consultations, and two more formal meetings and approximately three informal consultations are expected to be held before the Commission session in April 2015. The following are the matters seized by EXCOM at its various meetings over the past intersessional period:

(a) Preparations for the sixty-sixth Commission session in 2015;

(b) ECE input to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the Annual Ministerial Review of the Economic and Social Council;

(c) Approval of the organization of ECE regional meetings: i) Regional Ministerial Consultation on Monitoring and Accountability for the ECE region, September 2014; ii) Beijing+20 Regional Review Meeting, November 2014; iii) Regional Preparatory Meeting on Financing for Sustainable Development to be held in March 2015;

(d) Approval of the ECE Evaluation Policy and the 2014–2015 evaluation work plan;

(e) ECE Strategic Framework and the proposed programme budget for the 2016–2017 biennium;

(f) ECE technical cooperation activities 2012 and 2013;

(g) Approval of extrabudgetary projects;

(h) Process for strengthening transparency and accountability in the use of all extrabudgetary resources (whereby EXCOM will be regularly informed about extrabudgetary funding, including the use of resources and concrete results under all projects throughout the project cycle in accordance with the template of EXCOM; and all extrabudgetary projects will require EXCOM approval except: (i) those approved by

EXCOM as part of work programmes of ECE Sectoral Committees as well as (ii) those approved by the Contracting Parties as part of the programme work of the convention bodies);

(i) The Committee on Trade and the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration;

(j) Issues relating to the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), including the establishment of an EXCOM contact group to UN/CEFACT;

(k) Approval of matters relating to Sectoral Committees:

(i) the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2014–2015 and the establishment and terms of reference of the Group of Friends of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS);

(ii) the programme of work of the Transport subprogramme for 2014–2015; the renewal of the mandate and terms of reference of the Group of Experts towards Unified Railway Law; and the establishment of the Group of Experts on Safety at Level Crossings and the Group of Experts on Road Signs and Signals;

(iii) the programme of work of the Statistics subprogramme, including the establishment of three task forces;

(iv) the establishment and terms of reference of the Public-Private Partnership Business Advisory Board; and the revised terms of reference of the Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies;

(v) the terms of reference and programme of work of the Committee on Sustainable Energy; the mandates and terms of reference of its subsidiary bodies; and the work plans of the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Production from Fossil Fuels (2014–2015), the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane (2014–2015), the Group of Experts on Gas (2014–2015), and the Expert Group on Resource Classification (2013–2014);

(vi) the ECE-FAO integrated programme of work on Forestry and Timber for 2014–2017; the programme of work of the Forestry and Timber subprogramme for 2014–2015, and mandates and terms of reference of subsidiary bodies under the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry;

(v) the programme of work of the Housing and Land Management subprogramme for 2014–2015; and the renewal of mandates and terms of reference of the Working Party on Land Administration and the Real Estate Market Advisory Group;

(l) Endorsement of the Geneva United Nations Charter on Sustainable Housing;

(m) Matters relating to the Working Group on Ageing;

(n) Legislative mandates.

IV. Challenges and way ahead

11. At the time of submission of this document, EXCOM is in the process of preparing the draft of the negotiated outcome of the sixty-sixth session of the Commission. The challenge is to come up with a short and punchy political statement of ECE member States that provides a vision and direction for the next two years whilst demonstrating their

commitment and support to the work of the organization, in a manner that will enable it to respond adequately to the needs and priorities of member States, particularly for the implementation of the post-2015 agenda and the expected Sustainable Development Goals.

12. EXCOM, in its capacity as governing body, acting on behalf of the Commission in the intersessional period, needs to ensure that the strategic directions established by the Commission are implemented. Its decisions need to be made in an efficient and effective way, with due consideration of the relevant issues and in due time, and in a manner that is transparent and inclusive.

13. During the reporting period, in the implementation of Commission decision A (65) on the Outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE, EXCOM spent a great deal of time and energy at numerous formal and informal meetings, including bilateral consultations, discussing the action to be taken with regard to the Committee on Trade and the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration. A decision on this matter is expected very soon whereby the former is expected to be replaced by a Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards, and the latter will be renamed as Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships, with slightly revised terms of reference. Following this decision, EXCOM will need to follow up on its implementation and most likely will need to monitor the performance of the two committees for some time.

14. A number of areas require continued attention by EXCOM in the near future. These include: oversight and governance over the work of ECE in different sectors through, inter alia, interaction with chairpersons of Sectoral Committees; the application of the "Guidelines on Procedures and Practices for ECE bodies"; the legislative mandates to be included in the strategic framework underpinning the programmes of work; implementation of the ECE evaluation policy; extrabudgetary projects and their monitoring.

15. The real challenge for EXCOM is to ensure that, through effective interaction between member States and the secretariat, this governing body will focus on strategic and programmatic issues within its competence. At the same time, it needs to entrust the secretariat with efficient implementation and servicing of the various sectoral committees and convention bodies, and create the best conditions for ECE to continue its inspiring and multifaceted work that benefits the citizens in our member States.

16. Despite the enormous diversity between the countries of the ECE region and the recent economic challenges that have emerged, ECE member States can put their differences aside and continue to produce concrete and practical standards, best practices and international instruments that contribute to sustainable development in the ECE region and beyond.

17. Reaching multilateral agreements is no easy task. Yet ECE, with its 56 member States, has demonstrated to the world that in this region it is possible to agree. There is plenty of work ahead to reach concrete results in support of the future Sustainable Development Goals and EXCOM will play an essential role here due to its good cooperation with the secretariat.